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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA CONTACTS ASSESS HAMAS WANTS TO CONTINUE
CEASEFIRE IF GOI COMMITS TO KEEP CROSSINGS OPEN

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese, for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Gaza political contacts claim that Hamas disfavors military confrontation with Israel and, despite recent statements by Khalid Misha'l and other leaders, wants to continue the ceasefire (tahdiya) if agreement is reached to keep Gaza's crossings open. Contacts who regularly meet with Hamas leaders Ismayil Haniyah, Mahmud al-Zahar, and Khalil al-Haya say Hamas believes the GOI never followed through on its commitment to keep the crossings open, and that the GOI frequently initiates military actions and then closes the crossings when Palestinians retaliate. Hamas' main strategic goal is to open Rafah crossing, they say, but, in the short-term, it wants unrestricted deliveries of constructions materials, fuel, and food. A Gaza-based PLO Executive Committee told PolOff that the ceasefire is more important for ordinary Gazans than it is for Hamas, because Hamas members "never want for food, fuel, or money," while Gaza's citizens suffer terribly under the closure, and blame Israel and the international community, not Hamas, for their predicament. End summary.

Independent PLC Member: Hamas Undecided
on Tahdiya, and Ultimately Pragmatic

¶2. (C) Independent, Gaza-based PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa, who regularly meets with the Hamas leadership, told PolOff by phone December 16 that Hamas leaders want to demonstrate they can effectively govern Gaza. They need the crossings fully opened to achieve this, she said. Hamas' political echelon does not want a major confrontation with Israel, but believes it cannot afford to look weak, according to al-Shawwa.

Hamas Seeks to Open the Crossings;
Undecided on Tahdiya Despite Misha'l Statement

¶3. (C) Another contact who routinely meets with Mahmud al-Zahar told PolOff by phone December 16 that Damascus-based Hamas Politburo Chief Khalid Misha'l's comments rejecting the ceasefire were not coordinated with the Gaza leadership. This contact said Hamas' objective is to keep the crossings continuously open for all goods, and Hamas' political echelon would restrain the al-Qassam Brigades and other factions if the GOI would open the crossings and allow in fuel, construction materials, and food. This contact added that Hamas' leadership believes the GOI violated the Egyptian-brokered understanding by conducting operations inside the Gaza Strip and then closing the crossings when Hamas and other factions retaliated with rockets.

Independent PLO ExComm Member: Hamas Is
the Enemy, But Ceasefire Helps Gazans

¶4. (C) PLO Executive Committee (ExComm) member Riyad al-Khudari (strictly protect) told PolOff by phone from Gaza December 16 that Hamas wants the ceasefire to continue according to the original Egyptian-brokered understanding, as Hamas' leaders know they will not gain from continuing closures and fighting. Hamas' brutality and political missteps have hurt its popular standing, and it needs the crossings open to govern effectively, he said. Al-Khudari noted, however, that the ceasefire is more important for ordinary Gazans than it is for Hamas, because Hamas members "never want for food, fuel, or money." Gaza,s citizens, he noted, suffer terribly under the closure, and blame Israel and the international community, not Hamas, for their predicament.

¶5. (C) Comment: While Hamas wants the crossings open to demonstrate its ability to govern, another immediate political objective is to ensure that any resumption of violence is understood by Palestinians to be the result of GOI actions, specifically an alleged GOI failure to live up to its commitments under the tahdiya. End Comment.
MARCHESE